

## Against the Grain

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# Book Reviews: Monographic Musings

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# Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

**Column Editor's Note:** On occasion, this column shares reviews on books highlighting library personnel issues. Library shelvees, however, have never been in the Monographic Musings spotlight — that is, until now. **Eleanor I. Cook**, Assistant Director for Collections and Technical Services and librarian extraordinaire at East Carolina University's Joyner Library, is no stranger to leadership or to workplace literature. She co-authored the book *Conflict Management for Libraries* (see the September 2005 issue of *ATG*) and has authored a number of articles on best practices in technical services. She's also no stranger to *ATG*; you might recognize her name from her stellar column, *Drinking From the Firehose*. Many thanks to **Eleanor** for adding her knowledge to *Monographic Musings*. Seasons greetings and happy reading, everyone! — **DV**

**Tunstall, Patricia.** *Hiring, Training, and Supervising Library Shelvees*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2010. 978-0-8389-1010-8. 109 pages. \$48.00.

Reviewed by **Eleanor I. Cook** (East Carolina University)

I recently requested a review copy of this book to give to our Head of Circulation because we've been working together lately on a long-term weeding project and I know that shelving is the bane of her existence these days. We have a number of very overcrowded areas in our general stacks that are in desperate need of "distilling" as I like to say.

Will this book be of any use to her? — Most assuredly. It's a compact, no-nonsense volume with plenty of good advice. Its weakness for our (academic library) purpose is that it is decidedly geared toward the public library environment. However, that does not stop it from being useful in any library setting if you can substitute your classification system (LC or something else) when you hit the references to **Dewey**, and mentally interchange "student assistant" (or whoever makes up your temporary workforce) when the author refers to "library pages."

As the title indicates, this book is

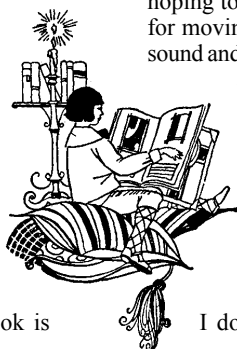
focused on the management aspects of supervising those individuals who shelve books in libraries. Because this population tends to be made up of individuals who are usually working part-time hours for modest wages, with high turn-over rates, the challenges of supervising and training are considerable. However, the author does an excellent job of addressing all aspects of the process — from advertising for help through disciplinary issues and firing with dignity. The strongest takeaways are in the training sections, which is information I was hoping to find. I also find **Tunstall's** method for moving large sections of materials to be a sound and logical process. Having experienced a complete building move with professional movers, I understand her sentiments concerning the effectiveness of such services. The author offers a "do-it-yourself" system that can work and may save your library thousands of dollars both in labor and clean up costs.

There are a couple of topics that I do not find in this book for which I

expected to see at least some mention. One is the proper handling of books and materials while shelving. There is essentially no coverage of this aspect at all. Emphasis is solely on the ability of shelvees to place books in correct order. Granted, there are plenty of good guides showing techniques for proper handling while shelving, so it's not that there is any lack of information available, but I would have assumed it would have been at least mentioned along the way. Another discussion I would have liked to have seen included is how shelvees can assist library staff who are involved in weeding projects. The author notes that shelves should not be allowed to get overfull, but then does not follow through with how that might be avoided (i.e., weeding). Related to that, there is not much coverage of the topic of short-term shifting which is commonly required, especially in libraries where space is at a premium and the weeding can't be done regularly for whatever reason.

Aside from these minor shortcomings, I find the book readable, practical, and laced with a sense of humor. The examples of skills tests for candidate screening are excellent and can be easily adapted by any type of library. There is an index and an appendix with examples of personnel forms and other useful materials. There is also an accompanying web site for the book embedded within the **ALA Editions** Website, although this author is not (yet?) utilizing it. (All it says at this writing is "Coming soon ...")

While many of the resources libraries provide these days for their readers are electronic, as long as we have physical materials on shelves, we will need to take care of those shelves the old-fashioned way. This book is therefore a welcome addition to the Circulation Supervisor's reference shelf.



## Something to Think About — Power Weeding!

Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Serials Librarian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) <masse36e@erau.edu>

**H**ow are things going in your neck of the woods? We are still in the throes of the economic depression/recession/or whatever the politically correct word is today. We are watching every penny and I mean squeezing it pretty hard. We have cut titles, probably some we should have done earlier. We are reassessing the formats we use and mostly the answer is any one of three choices (microform, print, electronic). Sometimes we don't have choices at all, because the organizations are hunkering down into their corporate shells and not letting us have access to their materials for our patrons. We can get a single use member status on electronic format only, but we can't share the information anymore. That defeats the purpose of having it and so we cancel the subscriptions. Of course, this year we have seen an extraordinary amount of cessations in the publishing industry and we see multiple publications by the same group being merged into one title. This is "power" weeding at its finest! All we have to do is sit back and watch the action, because our weeding is

being done for us. Since I protect the collection as a mother would her children, I find this action a little more satisfying and less guilt-ridden.

My energies today are being spent on verifying the existence of serial titles and trying to find missing items to fill our holes in the collection. Both are very frustrating! Remember, I wrote about my haunted computer? Well, it has been acting up today. Just as I get to the point of verifying a fact about a title, the computer crashes before I can hit the print button. It seems others on campus have been having similar problems, so I am a little more at ease with it. This is still annoying to lose everything when you are just at the point of printing or saving the material. A co-worker just told me she had finally completed a long contents note when her machine crashed erasing everything. I sure am glad they don't give us hammers as standard equipment or there would be no computers left standing. Give me some physical work to do, please! On these frustrating days, we take breaks by walking around the

building. It is so nice that the temperature is lower these days, so we can walk.

When you have piles of frustration, everything seems to go wrong. One co-worker found herself in a pool of coffee this morning as the cord to her warmer was wrapped around her chair leg and as she whirled the chair around to the desk, everything came crashing down. Luckily, the maid wasn't too far away and managed to save the day. I think there is a rule that at holiday times stuff just doesn't work right! Do you have the same problems? How has your week been? Not to leave you in too much of a negative bent, let us realize that the ups and downs come and go a lot like ocean waves. I feel that much good will come of the upheaval and force us to evolve our collections into leaner and stronger information packages for our patrons. We will find new ways to achieve better results and begin newer and better workflows for the future. Perhaps it will open our thoughts to more creative solutions. Is that something to think about? You betcha! 🍀